

ENDING THE GUN VIOLENCE EPIDEMIC

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Dr. Joseph Simpson, M.D., Ph.D., LACDMH Jail Mental Health, discussed the hot topic of gun violence and mental health in a meeting presented by the Violence Prevention Coalition of Greater Los Angeles at the California Endowment on Wednesday, January 30, 2013.

Over 80 attendees attended the meeting which featured a panel discussion of gun violence as a public health issue, a review of the history of gun violence, current and emerging legislation, mental health and guns, the impact of high capacity weapons and action steps/ what can be done to end the epidemic.

The panel featured Dr. Simpson, staff psychiatrist with LA County Jail Mental Health Services and Clinical Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Southern California; Suzanne Verge, President of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence; and Dr. Almaas Shaikh, trauma and critical care surgeon at St. Francis Medical Center and original member of Hospitals Against Violence, Empowering Neighborhoods (HAVEN). Main points the panelist left the 80 plus attendees with were:

- It's not "their" problem, it's ours; 400 billion dollars a year are spent in caring for people that wind up in trauma centers, most of those individuals do not have insurance, bills are paid by you and I, the tax payer.
- Discuss guns in the home, especially with children—over forty percent of all homes have guns. Don't be afraid to ask your child if their friends' families have guns and know where they are stored/if they are locked up.
- People don't just "snap" and go on killing rampages, there are signs prior. Encourage discussion of issues and mental health treatment possibilities.